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East Valley communities partner on dedicated veterans' court

Former and current U.S. military service men and women who have been charged with misdemeanor violations will have more opportunities to resolve underlying issues that may have led them to being charged, thanks to an expanding effort to address their unique needs and experiences.

On Nov. 9, several communities will come together to celebrate the establishment of the East Valley Regional Veterans' Court. The partnership includes the Chandler Municipal Court, Carefree-Cave Creek Consolidated Court, Fountain Hills Municipal Court, Gilbert Municipal Court, Paradise Valley Municipal Court, Scottsdale Municipal Court and the Tempe Municipal Court.

The centralized operation is located within the Tempe Municipal Court building. Each city will refer appropriate cases to the regional court; a given city's docket of cases will be heard on designated days.

The East Valley Regional Veterans' Court will help hundreds of veterans resolve their citations for everything from trespassing and disorderly conduct to domestic violence and DUI. Many veterans need assistance addressing homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, anger management and conflict resolution issues. Each veteran must agree to a case plan that may include counseling or treatment, in order to work on the issues that may be holding them back in civilian life. Social service agencies and the Department of Veterans Affairs collaborate with the court to create a customized plan for each veteran. If they make progress, they may get reduced or waived jail time or fines.

Partnering with other East Valley communities provides more veterans with access to a Veterans' Court. Current Veterans' Court Judge Pro Tem Gregg Maxon will continue to hear cases for the combined court. He said the East Valley Regional Veterans' Court will be an asset in providing these veterans with a pathway to reintegrate back into our communities.

"The whole aim of any dedicated veterans court is to help people improve their lives so they don't re-offend and wind up back in jails and courtrooms," said Maxon, a retired Brigadier General. "Our local veterans deserve a thoughtful but rigorous court experience that is sympathetic to their needs but sets them on a better path. They served our country; we can do our part to assist when they need us."

The East Valley Regional Veterans' Court joins other problem-solving courts in Maricopa County, like the Maricopa County Regional Homeless Court, which includes all courts in Maricopa County.

The East Valley Regional Veterans' Court is funded in part by the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services as made available through the Arizona Veterans' Donations Fund. A \$100,000 grant was awarded in support of establishing the East Valley Regional Veterans' Court.